

FACT SHEET

Ventilation and Designated Smoking Rooms

MYTH

“Ventilation protects people from second-hand smoke (SHS).”

FACT Ventilation as a solution to second-hand smoke (SHS) is a propaganda brainchild of the tobacco industry, and is not based on public health protection. Ventilation is marketed as a way to “accommodate” both smokers and non-smokers, somehow meaning that SHS is no more than an irritant or nuisance. Can you think of another industry or workplace where employees and customers alike would be expected to show accommodation in the face of repeated and prolonged exposure to known human health hazards? Ventilation is no substitute for 100% smoke-free by-laws.

MYTH

“Designated smoking rooms (DSRs) with separate ventilation can reduce SHS concentrations to acceptable levels of exposure.”

FACT There is no acceptable level of exposure to SHS. No scientific authority or regulatory health body in the world to date has established an exposure limit. The American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) is the world authority on ventilation, setting standards for ventilation rates that are widely adopted as industry norms. ASHRAE's *Addendum o to Standard 62 – Ventilation for Acceptable Indoor Air Quality* states that smoking areas should have increased rates of ventilation, based on comfort, but asserts that “*specific ventilation rate requirements cannot be determined until cognizant authorities determine the concentration of smoke that achieves an acceptable level of risk.*”¹

James Repace is an internationally recognized second-hand smoke physicist and former senior scientist at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). He describes how tornado-like levels of ventilation would be required to reach an acceptable risk level of exposure, based on the U.S. federal occupational and environmental health regulatory decision rules for assessing harm of environmental agents.² However, this is a moot point, as no acceptable level of exposure to SHS has yet been determined.

MYTH “The costs of separately ventilated DSRs are limited to just the proprietors who choose to install them.”

FACT Everyone ends up paying for the presence of DSRs. First and foremost, hospitality employees and cleaning staff end up paying for DSRs with their own health and well-being, as many are still expected to enter DSRs to carry out their work. With a large proportion of these jobs being entry-level, and with workers being young and/or ignorant of their rights, the right to refuse work is not realistic. Second, tax payers end up footing the bill for by-laws that permit DSRs, as they require more surveillance and enforcement than smoke-free by-laws. New regulatory bureaucracies with high levels of technical expertise are needed.

Proprietors who can afford a DSR must hire a contractor, engineer and architect. Based on the experience of proprietors in various Ontario municipalities, costs can range from \$50,000 to \$250,000 and up. DSRs create an uneven playing field, as not all proprietors have the option, the space or the money to install one. Seeing as the trend in Canada is towards 100% smoke-free indoor environments, proprietors may not even recoup expenses before a municipality moves to strengthen its by-law.

MYTH “Once a DSR with separate ventilation is installed, it's smooth sailing.”

FACT The real world of DSRs is full of reports of poorly maintained ventilation systems, clogged vents, inadequate air flows, over-crowding, and doors being propped open. High electricity bills have also caused some proprietors to turn off the ventilation some of the time, contributing to sub-optimal performance.

MYTH “If current ventilation technology doesn't make the grade, new technology will.”

FACT Experts have theorized that a new but unproven technology called displacement ventilation may be able to reduce SHS levels by as much as 90%.³ However, this claim does not have any credible evidence to support it. Furthermore, SHS has no safe level of exposure. Displacement would still not provide effective protection.

MYTH “*Courtesy of Choice*’ and the *Fair Air Association of Canada (FAAC)* legitimately represent the concerns of bar and restaurant owners.”

FACT “*Courtesy of Choice*” is a Canadian Tobacco Manufacturers' Council (CTMC) funded programme, run through the Hotel Association of Canada. The programme advocates for the use of ventilation and attempts to shift the focus from health onto one of “conviviality and mutual respect” between smokers and non-smokers.⁴ The Fair Air Association of Canada (FAAC) is another front with ties to the CTMC. The FAAC touts ventilation as a “win-win solution to the public smoking debate.”⁵ Incredibly, the now-infamous Black Dog study, which concluded that ventilation could address SHS health risks, has been dragged back from oblivion and is resurrected on the FAAC website.

- ¹ American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers, Inc. (2002). Addendum o to ANSI/ASHRAE Standard 62-2001. Available on-line: www.ashrae.org/template/PDFDetail?assetID=24653
- ² Repace, J., Kawachi, I., & Glantz, S. (1999). Fact Sheet on Secondhand Smoke. Available on-line: repace.com.
- ³ Repace, J. (2000). Can ventilation control smoke in the hospitality industry? Repace Associates, Inc. Available on-line: www.repace.com/reports.html
- ⁴ Courtesy of Choice. Available on-line: www.ih-ra.com/courtesy/
- ⁵ Fair Air Association of Canada. Available on-line: www.faac.ca/ventilationsolutions.htm